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ABSTRACT

Identified are issues in the classification of physically handicapped children. Issues include the need for safeguards to assure education and ancillary services at a time when categorical aid is questioned and the need to identify useful alternatives to categorizing children. (DB)

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Classification of the Physically Handicapped
Static Phenomenon or Evolving Process

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Mini-Session-Critical Issues
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Council for Exceptional Children

The following statement was part of a working paper (Wolinsky) prepared for the Task Force on Physical and Sensory Handicaps as part of the Project on Classification of Exceptional Children.

> "Futurists imply that the concerns of tomorrow will not be so much with totally different technologies as such, but with the nature of complex systems, and questions about the results and implications of the breakthrough of today. This, of course, implies a different approach to a resolution of problems then say fifty or even twenty-five years ago, for the technology and knowledge was still to come."

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To a large extent this is our task today. The title of this session is Classification of the Physically Handicapped-Static Phenomenon or Evolving Process. What is presumed in this statement is that there are certain children who because of distinct and specified medical conditions are categorized for diagnostic purposes, for treatment and follow-up. However what is also apparent is that the values of looking at a particular child in a specified way may be so corrupted that the child becomes the recipient of a service that has negative by-products, in terms of personal adaptive behavior and social relationships within a larger community.

We have made public confession as to the problems of categories without adequate control. We have new legislation that insists upon individual courses of treatment to be reviewed regularly in order to receive funds. However we have no assurances that we do not now once again embark upon another restrictive avenue of service and care for the physically handicapped.

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Jasper Harvey in the February issue of Update writes:

> "This year particularly we are faced with many new challenges in the field of special education. Rights and laws are being examined. More information is available. Teaching techniques are being expanded and refined. The challenge has been made to fulfill the right to an education for all children, to safeguard the confidentiality of information, to provide adequate financing programs, to integrate more exceptional children into regular education, and to improve the scope and quality of teacher training." (1976-2)

During the next few hours we have been asked to begin to cope with some of the aspects of this complex system. Let us explore the problems in terms of the systems within which we work, and define critical issues, we have been asked to give to the Executive Committee of CEC some statements of direction in which to direct their concerns as we enter this new era of work with those who are defineably different.

We are a relatively small group, we will further divide into _____ groups of _____ each. Please choose a chairman and recorder, include your recommendations, majority as well as minority, list participants and affiliations. Give them to me. I will collate them and present them as an ad hoc report.

In order to focus our time, I have been asked to prepare the following items for your consideration. You all have copies of as well as the original document on which this material is based. You may not wish to discuss them, for you have others or you do not consider them to be critical.

1. We have many systems that service physically handicapped children on the bases of classification. How do we utilize their expertise in more comprehensive ways? Do new questions have to be asked? What systems could be better utilized? What role should CEC play?

2. What safeguards must be put into effect to assure that education and ancillary services continue at a time when categorical aid is being questioned.

3. Now that we know the dangers of categories and have denounced old ways of handling problems, what are some useful alternatives.

4. If we are now going to emphasize human performance and functional relationships-the reasons for classification-what performance do we mean, and how do we analyze relationships.

5. If we now avoid the negative aspect of classification (exclusion, self-fulfilling hypothesis etc.) how do we best use its positive aspect; the ability to interpret or predict some facet of human performance by seeking relationships between what is described and a particular activity.

6. Are we now interested in a hierarchy of functions? If so, how do they relate to the concept of the disability or the condition as specifically defined and described.

7. Do different time periods have different meaning in terms of differing approaches to classification of children.

8. We now enter a different era in terms of classification and analysis. Are we exchanging the medical model for the psychological model (of task, behavior description, abilities)? What are the problems in terms of professional education, parental role and for the child itself? What are the dangers.

9. As new "populations emerge" for special education what are the issues that are specific to their needs.

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